NEWMAN IN FRANCE

BY

SISTER MARY BENOIT HOLAHAN, R.S.M.

Ph.B., Loyola University, 1919
A.M., Loyola University, 1924
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AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

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NEWMAN IN FRANCE

French awareness of Newman during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been manifested in numerous ways. The earliest significant indication of that awareness is perpetuated in the files of *l'Univers* and the volume *Le Protestantisme aux prises avec la doctrine catholique.* Both sources contain the record of the correspondence carried on (1835-1836) between the Anglican Newman and a French Abbé, Jean Nicolas Jager, professor of history at the Sorbonne, in support of their respective tenets. An outgrowth of the controversy was Newman's "The Prophetical Office of the Church Viewed Relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism," incorporated in *Via Media.*

Newman's collaboration in A. H. Christie's translation of Fleury's *Histoire ecclésiastique,* begun in 1837, established another Newman-France affiliation, as did, later, Jules Gondon's publication of *Conversion de cent cinquante ministres anglicans avec une notice sur Messieurs Newman, Ward, et Oakeley.*

Again, the activity, in France, of John Dobrée Dalgairns, Newman's friend and fellow-convert, helped to disseminate knowledge of Newman's works. Jules Ferry, by his decree against the Jesuits in 1881, became unwittingly an agent in the strengthening of Newman-French bonds. The exiled clerics, particularly Henri Bremond and Léonce de Grandmaison, established for years in England, achieved mastery of that country's literature and gave vigorous impulse to literary, philosophical, and religious appreciation of Newman in France.

Le Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, published in 1903 and the years following, devoted seventy-one columns to an article on Newman. Magazine notices multiplied around his name. *La Revue du Clergé, La Revue de Philosophie, Annales de Philosophie, Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne, Etudes, Le Correspondant, La Revue d'Histoire, Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique,* and many more paid tribute to him. To mention a few items chronologically: Justin Fèvre, in 1873, wrote an article on Newman for *La Semaine du Clergé,* in a series called "Personnages catholiques contemporains"; E. S. Purcell's *Life of Manning,* with its poignant Newman pages, had immediate "retentissement" in *Journal des Débats* in the form of a review by

M. A. Filon, whom Bremond characterized as "l'homme de France le plus au courant des choses anglaises;" soon after, *La Revue d'Histoire* contained H. Hemmer's "Manning, Newman, et la question des Catholiques à Oxford."

Almost all phases of Newman's works have been represented in translations—sermons, treatises, historical sketches, letters, fiction, poetry, polemical and devotional works. Translators seem to have had in mind edification and instruction for a class of readers composed largely of priests, seminarians, Catholic journalists.

The first of Newman's works available in translation is his *Retractation,* in 1847, followed rapidly by the *Achilli Trial, Loss and Gain, Apologia, Sermons,* etc. *Callista* has had the most numerous recorded translations. Boyeldieu and Gondon each produced a translation of *Essay on Development,* the former so inferior to the latter as to have roused harsh comment in a series of French periodicals. Gondon followed his *Development Essay* translation by French renderings of the *Oratory Sermons, Sermons to Mixed Congregations,* and the *Present Position of Catholics in England.* Other translators of the *Sermons* are Deferrière, Saleilles, Dimnet, and Folghera.

Loss and Gain had sufficient attraction for translators to boast of publication in three cities in one year. *Grammar of Assent* was slow to find a French translator. In 1907, however, appeared a translation (that of Mme. Gaston Paris), which elicited Bremond's praise.

The most important of Newman's translated letters are his "Letter Addressed to Rev. E. B. Pusey on Occasion of his *Eironicon* of 1864" and a "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk on Occasion of Gladstone's Expostulations of 1874."

Notable because it reflected the departure from non-translation policy on the part of a prominent periodical, was the action of *Le Correspondant,* May 25, 1844, in accepting for publication Newman's "The Inspiration of Scripture", published three months earlier in *The Nineteenth Century.*

French biographers of Newman are not numerous but they are distinguished. Paul Thureau-Dangin has contributed two

notable accounts; Mme Goyau, Georges Grappe, Raoul Goût, and Henri Bremond, each, one. The six biographies reflect a thorough study of the subject and a surprising acquaintance with Newman's works in the original. The writers' reactions very widely from objective presentation of facts to daring psychological interpretations to which many English investigators might hesitate to subscribe.

French critics of Newman pause over his association with Manning; his likenesses to and contrasts with Pascal or Bossuet; the biographical, religious, and stylistic parallels between Newman's story and that of Renan; the sources of Newman's literary excellence; the cleavage between Newman and French "sermonnaires"; the doctrinal or character flaws that French eyes, from trans-channel vantage points, profess to see.

A definite phase of French criticism takes the form of championing a temporarily defeated hero. Such voices as those of Bremond and Dimnet are audible in this chorus as they are in that other which enumerates the Oxonian's antinomies.

The most notable of Newman's followers, Léon Ollé-Laprune and Maurice Blondel, have contributed to the clarifying and disseminating of Newmanian tenets. Both followers seem to have attached more importance to *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* than to any other of Newman's works. The relation between Newman and Blondel, to cite an instance illustrative of French discipleship, is the stress laid by both on action and its exigencies. They approached the subject, however, from different angles. Newman conceived his theory of implicit reasoning on the ground that most of our thought, as a preparation for action and for living, is concerned with the concrete reality about which conceptual thinking and formal reasoning supply no actual and certain knowledge. This want is supplied, according to Newman, by implicit reasoning. Hence, in his theory, action is brought in as an occasion for the theory, not as the direct object of his inquiry. For Blondel, on the contrary, action is the main object of his analysis. The moral problem, the problems of our destiny, and the manner of attaining it are his main concern, and from his analysis of the chief forms and aspects of action he concludes to the need of recognizing the necessity and the ex-

istence of a divine intervention in the form of revelation and of grace.

The two works of Newman which had most influence in France were the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* and *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent.* Priest and layman, book and pamphlet, took cognizance of the two essays. The interest of Catholic France in the first of these is attributable to the fact that it was the work by which Newman is said to have "written himself into the Church;" that it ended in "establishing consistency between modern Rome and the Church of the Fathers, the former being the full fruit of which the seed only was seen at first;" that it illustrated Newman's application of "evolutionary theories to doctrinal developments."

There were objectors to Newman's "development" theories. He was reproached, for example, for having studied the matter only in set circumstances, and beginning with the Apostolic Fathers without attention to anterior manifestations in the Bible.

French reactions to the *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* range from stern criticism to unqualified praise. Dispassionate comment and magisterial elucidation abound. Chapter nine, "The Illative Sense", is the major theme of most French discussions of *Grammar of Assent.* H. P. Boullaye considers the "illative sense" theory the eminently instructive part of the work. He recalls that the English convert there acknowledges the impossibility of formal demonstration in many cases, the readiness of the mind to judge often without the aid of logic properly so-called, the existence of some very firm and legitimate convictions that defy analysis, the use one can make of probabilities themselves. A. Bazaillas invests the Newmanian doctrine with an unearthly quality. According to this French critic, Newman has discovered a realm in which belief is compounded of the joy and rapture of the Divine presence. Newman's soul was above the methodical processes of that abstract reasoning which, nevertheless, he knew how to handle but always while aiming higher and aspiring to go alone in his own way to the great God.

Newman's connection with the Vatican Council and Modernism had definite reverberations in France. Discernible, before and after the Vatican Council, are two widely differing French

reactions to Newman's views, one hostile, the other friendly; and, during the Modernistic controversy, a similar division of opinion.

Newman had, as far back as 1858, deplored the "exuberant and at times extravagant statements on matters of doctrine or devotion" which certain French writings presented. When the definition of papal infallibility impended, Newman urged that it be expressed "in such terms as would satisfy all the requirements of theology." He felt that certain French journalists overlooked historical facts and theological distinctions. Happily, his fear that the definition might appear to sanction the extravagances of certain French promoters was not realized. When, later, Gladstone asserted that civil loyalty and adherence to the infallibility doctrine were incompatible, it was Newman who rose to refute the charge. His "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk" is the equivalent of an *Apologia* for him and the moderate French element, his confederates.

The Modernistic controversy arose around Newman as the result of Abbé Loisy's attempt to cover his own relativistic and symbolistic interpretation of dogma under the authority of Newman. Some blamed Newman for having paved the way to Modernism; others defended the orthodoxy of his position. Traces of the controversy appeared in all the Catholic periodicals from about 1895 to 1914: *Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne, Revue du Clergé Français, Revue Pratique d'Apologétique, Quinzaine, Etudes, Ami du Clergé,* and a host of others. Even newspapers like *L'Univers, La Vérité, La Croix, Demain,* etc., joined in the controversy. The persistence or collapse of the Modernistic imputations reflect the fluctuations of Newman-French affinities. The approbation of two Popes—Leo XIII's, manifested in the conferring of the cardinalate upon Newman, Pius X's, in an explicit declaration of Newman's orthodoxy—should be considered the final answer to unfriendly allegations.

A series of French theses based upon Newman's theological, philosophical, and literary contribution testify climactically to the fact of Newman sympathies in France. Notable theses mark the years from 1880 to 1937, treating wholly or chiefly one or other of the world's indebtednesses to Newman. Representative titles are: *De la Certitude morale* (Léon Ollé-Laprune); *l'Action*

(Maurice Blondel); *La théorie du Cardinal Newman sur le développement du dogme chrétien* (Désiré Joye); *Du Protestantisme au Catholicisme: J. H. Newman* (Raoul Goût); *Exposé critique de la doctrine de Newman* (A. P. Jorimann); *John Henry Newman dans le mouvement d'Oxford de 1833-1839* (M. Battistini); *La Connaissance religieuse chez le Cardinal Newman* (M. l'Abbé de la Juillère); *La Personnalité littéraire de Newman* and *John Henry Newman, éducateur* (Fernande Tardivel).

The last three theses deserve special comment. That of M. l'Abbé de la Juillère, *La Connaissance religieuse chez le Cardinal Newman,* had the distinction of being reported in a contemporary periodical against a background of doctoral examiners in Toulouse, and the give and take of a final "oral" from which the defender emerged "magna cum laude." Fernande Tardivel appeared twice before Sorbonne authorities, with primary and secondary theses, to uphold her judgment of Newman's personality and of his educational ideals. Her studies are important for their presentation of Newman's stylistic values as well as for the interpretation of his *Idea of a University.* A glance at her findings in the first connection may well close this summary.

Miss Tardivel's study of Newman's style is a model of concentration upon perfections that escape the average reader. She connects Newman's skill in the use of words with that in the use of bow and violin; declares that he has attained to artistic prose because of his twofold gifts as psychologist and musician; finds his *s's, h's, w's* distributed with the effect of a vocal incantation; believes that he elicits dentals, gutturals, liquids spontaneously to accord with the intellectual theme which they express. She perceives the Newmanian devise of ternary rhythm—three cadences succeeding one another, each crowning the hope suggested in its predecessor.

The Sorbonne candidate realizes how much Newman borrows, for his analogies, from atmospheric elements, from the play of light and shadow, from the reflections of objects upon water, from the transparency of fountains; she lingers over classic reminiscences in his prose, Ciceronian or Attic; she detects at times a stylistically semitic flavor and ascribes it to Judea's proximity to Hesiod's country; she suggests a Newman kinship with Wordsworth and Shelley.

With the apparent conviction that she has found Newman's stylistic secret, this feminine representative of a race famous for age-long possession of the effective-writing formula asserts that Newman's power with the pen is begotten of his power with thought. Newmanian style, thinks the French investigator, retraces line by line the mental vision of which it is the concrete projection. The style is clear because the vision was incisive, penetrating, direct.

Finally, worthy of note is the small chiding administered by Miss Tardivel to England for its comparative indifference to Newman, and her commendation of her own countrymen for their more appreciative attitude. The fact that she successfully defended her twofold study in what, at least in pre-war days, was "le centre de l'enseignement en France" gives an impression of the extent to which Newman awareness has found its way into the enlightened thought of England's nearest continental neighbor.

VITA

Sister Mary Benoit Holahan, R.S.M., was born July 27, 1886, in Waukon, Iowa. She attended, through elementary and high schools, St. Mary's Academy, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. In 1905, she entered the novitate of the Sisters of Mercy of Chicago. She received the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy from Loyola University in that city in 1919, the degree of Master of Arts in English from the same University in 1924, the degree of Master of Arts in French from the University of Illinois in 1934. Since 1907, except for a several years sojourn in Colorado and the time devoted to study, she has taught in schools of her Order in Chicago.